

OBSERVATIONS

ON THE

SIGNS AND DUTIES

OF

THE PRESENT TIMES:

With some Account of a Society of Clergymen in London, who have agreed to preach in rotation weekly lectures in each other's churches and chapels, on this important subject: and a Summary of their views, and endeavours to excite a spirit of prayer, and of exertion to promote vital godliness at this alarming period.

DRAWN UP BY THE DESIRE OF THE SOCIETY, AND
PUBLISHED WITH THEIR APPROBATION,

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N. B. The profits arising from the sale of this pamphlet will be applied to the support of the LOCK ASYLUM, which was instituted A. D. 1787, for the reception of female patients, discharged cured from the LOCK HOSPITAL, who shew any disposition to repent and forsake their evil courses.

Here they are clothed, maintained, and instructed, till they can be restored, either to their friends, or to the community, in a way of honest industry, according to their ability: and if after their restoration to society, they be found to have behaved well in their respective situations, and are nevertheless thrown out of employment; such further protection and encouragement are given them, as the circumstances of the institution will admit. None have therefore hitherto been deserted, who had not previously forfeited all claim to further help by inexcusable misconduct.

A considerable number have by this institution been restored to society; and many of them have for several years given sufficient evidence of genuine repentance.

Subscriptions taken in for this Charity at the Banking-house of Messrs. DRUMMONDS, Charing-crofs; and by the Secretary at the Lock Hospital.



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OF

THE TIMES, &c.

THE holy Scriptures are represented by the Apostle, not only as “able to make us wise “unto salvation, through faith which is in Christ “Jesus,” but as sufficient likewise to “*furnish “us thoroughly unto all good works.”* (2 Tim. iii. 15—17.) Hence we may conclude with certainty, that they contain instructions, cautions, and examples, suitable to our various circumstances; and, if properly attended to, would in all cases be a “light to our feet and a lantern “to our paths.” On the other hand, the same Apostle observes, that “Whatsoever “things were written aforetime were written “*for our learning:*” (Rom. xv. 4:) so that we may also be sure, that every part of Scripture contains some important lesson, which at one time or other may be peculiarly useful to us.

These considerations may suffice to prepare the reader for attending carefully to a passage in sacred history, which may hitherto have but little attracted his notice. The principal persons of the tribe of Issachar, in the days of David, had so well considered the signs and events of the times in which they lived; and so well understood what the Lord was doing, and what he called them to do; that they were enabled to render their influence among their brethren subservient to the important good of their country. “The children of Issachar—were

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“men

“ men that had understanding of the times, to
 “ *know what Israel ought to do*: the heads of
 “ them were two hundred, and all their
 “ brethren were at their commandment’.”

The Lord had promised that David should reign over all Israel: but so long as Ishbosheth the son of Saul was living, the men of Issachar wisely judged, that the time was not arrived for the fulfilment of that promise, and that a premature attempt would only occasion the needless effusion of human blood: but when Ishbosheth was removed, they understood that the time was come, and that it was their duty to afford David all the assistance in their power. Had they moved sooner, or had they waited longer, they would have acted unseasonably: but the *timing* of the service was as important as the service itself.

We may learn from this instance, that there is a kind of observation and intelligence concerning the circumstances and events of the times, which is intimately connected with the knowledge and performance of our duty; and that this *understanding of the times* is peculiarly needful and useful to those, who in any way have influence over the conduct of collective bodies. It may indeed at first sight be thought to belong exclusively to statesmen, senators, magistrates, and others who possess secular distinctions; and it might be supposed that ministers of religion especially have little occasion for it. But this sentiment, when adopted in too general a sense, is evidently erroneous: for though the *political* understanding of the times is principally requisite for those, who are concerned

cerned to know what they ought to do *politically* for the good of the nation; yet every man's duty varies, in some respects, according to circumstances, and cannot properly be performed, if he remain entirely uninformed in these matters.

The understanding of the times, however, which is necessary for Ministers or private Christians, does not greatly relate to political questions: to be well acquainted with the instructions of the holy Scriptures concerning the Lord's providential government of the world and of the church, and to know how to apply them to events which take place around us, is sufficient. Thus we shall be enabled to form a judgment, from what men have done, or are attempting, concerning what the Lord is doing or about to do; and to determine, from his word, the special duties to which he calls us in our several places.

This knowledge is recommended in the Scriptures, and the want of it is severely re-
 proved. Thus Isaiah says, " In that day did
 " the Lord of Hosts call to weeping, and to
 " mourning, and to baldness, and to girding
 " with sackcloth: and behold joy and gladness,
 " slaying oxen and killing sheep, eating flesh
 " and drinking wine. Let us eat and drink,
 " for to-morrow we shall die! And it was re-
 " vealed in mine ears by the Lord of Hosts,
 " Surely this iniquity shall not be purged from
 " you, till you die." And Micah speaks to
 the same effect, " The Lord's voice crieth unto
 " the city, and *the man of wisdom shall see thy*
 " *name*; hear ye the rod, and who hath ap-
 " pointed it¹."

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¹ Is. xxii. 12—14. Mic. vi. 9.

Our Lord, reproving the Jews for their unbelief, thus addresses them—"Ye hypocrites, ye can discern the face of the sky; but can ye not discern the signs of the times?" And in predicting the siege and destruction of Jerusalem, he particularly describes the signs of those times, and emphatically adds, "Let him that readeth understand." Thus he plainly declared, that the wisdom, duty, safety, and comfort of his disciples, were inseparably connected with an attentive observation and an accurate judgment in respect of the events which were taking place in the world.—It is indeed allowed, that the primitive Christians were in very different circumstances than we are: yet it must also be granted, that, in many respects, we can neither know nor do our duty, without adverting to the state of the church and the nation, and forming a decided opinion on the dangers which threaten, and the evils which weaken and corrupt, both the one and the other. Without some measure of this understanding of the times, we shall be at a loss to determine, whether we are called to wait in quiet submission, knowing that "our strength is to fit still;" or to engage in active services: and whether mourning and fasting, or joyful praise and thanksgiving be the business of the day.

Indeed in perilous and disastrous times, it is of great importance, that we should know the *source* and *origin* of the evils which alarm or distress us, and the way in which they may be counteracted with the best prospect of success; in order that our exertions may be made and

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* Matt. xvi. 3. Luke xii. 56, 57.

our supplications presented, in the manner most suitable to the emergency. For all our endeavours must be stimulated, repressed, or regulated, according to our views of these subjects.

This kind of knowledge and discernment is especially needful and useful to ministers of the gospel: for, though it must be acquired by a careful observation of the dispensations of Providence, compared with the Scriptures; yet the bulk of Christians are generally led into it by means of their pastors. No doubt there are very numerous exceptions: yet Ministers possess a variety of advantages above most in their several congregations for obtaining information, and coming to a settled judgment on the aspect of publick affairs; and if they do not give a right direction to the thoughts and opinions of the people, others may probably mislead them; or at best, many even of the more conscientious among them will either wholly neglect, or very slightly attend to, the special duties of the times.

It must therefore be incumbent on the Ministers of religion to look about them, to observe what is passing in the world, to mark the *signs of the times*, and as watchmen to warn the people of approaching danger: not in order to engage them in political discussions, but to excite them to perform their several duties, according to the emergency of the case.

It may be supposed, that few well-informed persons will deny that the present times wear a most extraordinary appearance. They have in fact called forth the energies and activity of men, to a degree almost unparalleled in history:
and

and after every abatement for the feelings of the persons more immediately concerned, we can scarcely doubt, but that distant countries and remote posterity must deem them peculiarly disastrous and dreadful.

The Christianity, most prevalent through the greatest part of Europe for ages past, has unquestionably been very corrupt both in principle and practice ; and it has been rendered subservient to the base designs of wicked men : nor can it be denied that arbitrary power, ecclesiastical and civil, has oppressed vast multitudes, and introduced grievances which loudly called for redress. But the speculations of men, arrogating to themselves the title of *philosophers*, concerning both religion and government, under pretence of remedying these evils, have led by direct consequence to *infidelity and anarchy* : and these speculations, having been for a considerable time secretly propagated with profound sagacity, ardent zeal, and unwearied perseverance, at length produced such convulsions as scarcely ever shook the world in former ages.

The impetuosity with which the revolution in France was effected ; the atrocities attending it ; the vast projects of the leaders ; the immense resources of that powerful country ; the peculiar concurrence of events, which rendered national bankruptcy a source of almost inexhaustible wealth, by giving occasion to the seizure of the whole property of vast multitudes at home and abroad ; the astonishing success of schemes at first deemed rash and chimerical ; the revolutions that have followed in other countries ; the accumulating force of the impetuous torrent ; and the threatening aspect of these

these stupendous events on the constitutions, laws, and liberties of other nations, and on the property and lives of the inhabitants, have caused and must cause many and just alarms.

But the interests of religion should most engage our attention: and here we may assert without exaggeration, that the subversion of Christianity, as well as of popery and superstition, has been the express and settled purpose of many agents in these convulsions, and the genuine tendency of the measures adopted by others, who perhaps had no such intention. Our business however is not so much with the actions and designs of men, as with the dispensations of Providence, and the duty to which these direct us.

It is undeniable, that many late events have the appearance of accomplishing the prophecies concerning the destruction of Antichrist: and here it seems to be our duty to be still, and to wait till it be manifest what the Lord is about to do. We cannot *rejoice* to see infidelity and atheism supplant even *corrupted* Christianity, considering this event as detached from its future consequences: yet we cannot consistently *regret* the removal in any degree of that permanent mountainous obstruction to the spread of the pure religion of Jesus; except as it involves many other lamentable transactions. We should, however, pray to God, that he would speedily terminate the dominion of the destroyers, and send forth those who may plant genuine Christianity in the regions which they have ravaged: and we ought to sympathize with the sufferers of every description; and afford them our help, as far as we can, without sanctioning their
 pernicious

pernicious tenets or partaking of their evil deeds.

But while we contemplate the distant storm, or make observations on the earthquakes which convulse other regions; we must also feel for ourselves; for the peace and security of Britain, and for the interests of Christianity among us. Whatever may be said of our insular situation, our resources, our national spirit, our constitution, or the measures adopted by our rulers; or whatever may appear *probable* according to the general course of human affairs: we must still remember, that "vain is the help of man," and that, "Except the Lord keep the city, the watchman waketh but in vain."

But further, however favourably we may think concerning the religion of our country, as it is delineated in the authorized books of the established church, or in the creeds and confessions of a large body among the dissenters; or concerning the prevalence of the gospel in the land: yet he who impartially compares *facts* with the *Bible*, and contrasts our national advantages with our national character, will by no means *on this ground* be sanguine in his expectations as to the event of our present dangers. Nay, rather he will almost be ready to think he hears the alarming enquiry, "Shall not I visit for these things? saith the Lord; and shall not my soul be avenged on such a nation as this?"

The more therefore serious persons value our civil and religious privileges, the greater *in this view* will be their apprehensions on attentively considering the signs of the times; and the deeper their conviction, that the Lord might justly

justly give us up into the hands of our enraged enemies. On whatever side we turn our eyes we must witness such atrocious crimes, as tend to dismay our hearts, more than all the menaces of our haughty assailants: and we can find nothing suited to relieve our terrors, except we advert to the remnant of real Christians scattered through the land. In subordination to the Lord's infinite mercies, our hope of preservation rests on this company, and on their supplications and exertions: and this consideration leads us anxiously to enquire what can be done to stir up this whole remnant, to attend as with one soul, regardless of party-distinctions, to the alarming signs and important duties of the times? and what individual or collective efforts may be made, to increase the number of those who are indeed the chariots and horsemen of the nation?

Some ministers in the metropolis, having frequently conferred together on this subject, at length deliberately entered into a consultation on the best methods of accomplishing these desirable ends, in their several situations, and by their combined endeavours. It was very obvious, that prayer for the church and nation was peculiarly seasonable and obligatory; and we unanimously determined, that, by the help of God, we would ourselves attend to it, in the closet, in the family, and on every proper occasion; and that we would earnestly recommend the same to our several congregations; exhorting them to join their supplications for the land to those of their brethren, on every day, but especially to make this topick a prominent part of their devotions on the Lord's

day evening, both in their families and in private.

These considerations, however, did not rest here; but produced a general conviction, that the present emergency called us and our people to other duties likewise, and that it would be very useful for us particularly to examine the subject. This appeared the more seasonable, when we reflected, that numbers, aware of the evil of political discussions from the pulpit, and of rendering religious ordinances subservient to the gratification of men's passions and prejudices; are ready to conclude that we have nothing to do with the state of publick affairs, or, in other words, that *in this respect* we have actually no duties at all: while others seem to take it for granted, that no one who differs from them in *political* sentiment can possibly be influenced by religious principles.

It was therefore agreed among a few friends, that a sermon should be preached *weekly*, on the usual lecture-day and hour, in our several churches and chapels by rotation, on *the signs and duties of the times*, by some other of the company than the stated pastor; and that other ministers of the established church should be invited to join us, by giving their pulpits and employing their labours in the same cause.

This was begun about a year ago, and is still continued with considerable encouragement: and as we greatly desire to unite our brethren, throughout the land, in similar measures; we have at length determined to publish an account of our designs; both in order to excite attention, to prevent misapprehension, to obviate prejudice, and to stimulate others to imitate

tate us, as far as our conduct is judged to accord with the principles of sacred Scripture.

We would therefore propose our sentiments on the following subjects to the candid attention of pious Christians, however distinguished, in every part of Great Britain.

I. The duty of intercession for the nation, and for the church, in seasons of danger and distress.

II. The nature and special objects of those prayers, which may be supposed availing on such occasions.

III. The prevalency of acceptable prayer, according to the Scriptures.

IV. And lastly, The other duties which are incumbent on us, along with our prayers, in the present emergency.

These topicks, briefly touched on and applied, will enable the reader to form a judgment concerning the designs of this society, and the tendency of their proceedings. But a form of prayer is also added, as more directly expressive of our sentiments, in respect of the special objects of our supplications.—We proceed therefore to consider,

I. The duty of intercession for the nation, and for the church, in seasons of danger and distress.

If we could conceive a number of Christians so circumstanced, that the welfare of the nation, in which they resided, had not the least discoverable connection with the interests of religion, it would yet, according to the Scrip-

tures, be their duty to pray for the peace of the land, more especially if they were protected, and enjoyed peace in it. The captive Jews at Babylon were grievously oppressed by their haughty conquerors, and exposed to persecution on account of their religion: but as it was the will of God they should sojourn there for a season, they were required, not only to "seek the peace of the city," by submission to the rulers in all things lawful, and by a quiet and inoffensive deportment; but also, to "pray to the Lord for it¹;" and the false prophets, who inculcated contrary principles, were severely rebuked for misleading them. Surely then it must be incumbent on us, who enjoy as much liberty and as many privileges, as perhaps any nation ever did for a length of time, to seek and pray for the peace and protection of our country.

It may perhaps be objected, that when the seventy years of captivity were about to expire, and Cyrus, the predicted deliverer of the Jews, approached Babylon; it could not be their duty to pray for the success of Belshazzar against him. We may however derive instruction from the very *silence* of Scripture; for it is nowhere intimated that the Jews were directed to alter their conduct on this emergency, or that they actually did alter it. The more intelligent indeed must have been sensible, that a revolution was at hand: but the Lord seemed to say, "Be still and know that I am God:" "Stand still, and ye shall see the salvation of God." They were not called to take any active part in those transactions: and the truly
pious

¹ Jer. xxix. 7.

pious remnant among them would doubtless pray *particularly* for the restoration of Jerusalem, with the temple and its sacred worship; and for the deliverance of the nation from captivity: and probably in other respects they would be more *general*, as leaving the Lord to accomplish his word in that manner which seemed good in his sight.

It may, however, be further observed, that no people can possibly know themselves to be in exactly similar circumstances. The fulfilment of prophecies is not at present so distinctly marked by notes of time and place, as to enable the most discerning to know precisely when any great event may be expected. Nor have we a *prophetical name* given us, by which we may discover any distinguished instrument in the work, as the Jews might know Cyrus with his army of Medes and Persians. It is therefore most evidently the duty of every Christian, wherever situated, to pray for the peace of the land, according to the general tenor of Scripture; and against the horrors of invasion, carnage, and desolation. The Lord indeed may see good to grant the *spirit* of such requests, in a manner that does not accord to the *letter* of them: as when we intercede for the health or life of a beloved relative, the prayer may be accepted, and answered in the best manner, while the special object of it is not granted. And in both cases we may afterwards discern and adore the wisdom, faithfulness, and love of God, in the very dispensation, from which we previously shrunk with dread and aversion.

If indeed the present events be intended to
prepare

prepare the way for the destruction of the Roman Antichrist, we are still incompetent to determine what degree of devastation must attend that great catastrophe, or how far the shock must be felt. We may therefore very consistently beseech the Lord, to terminate those awful judgments, which have for several years convulsed Europe; and to silence the blasphemies of infidels and atheists, that their detestable tenets may not permanently succeed to the idolatrous superstitions and delusions of popery. But especially we should with all earnestness present our supplications unto Almighty God, intreating him to avert these tremendous calamities from our native country: for whatever be the crimes of Britain, it can scarcely be supposed, we are so infected with the leaven of papal antichristianity, that nothing but revolutions and massacres can extirpate it. On the contrary there seems a ground of hope, that in this respect we shall be exempted from the more desolating judgments, which we have reason to think will attend those predicted events: especially if with one consent we beseech the Lord to “pour out upon us his Spirit from on high;” that our faith, worship, and character may better accord to our advantages and profession.

But whatever may be the designs of God, in his mysterious Providence, he needs not to be assisted by our neglect of any duty: for his commands, not his decrees, predictions, or dispensations, are the rule of our conduct. Now it is his command, that “supplications, prayers, intercessions, and giving of thanks, be made for all men; for kings, and for all
“ that

“ that are in authority, that we may lead a
 “ quiet and peaceable life, in all godliness and
 “ honesty.” As this was the duty of Christians, when living under pagan persecuting emperors; when the prosperity of the government might have been considered as inimical to the peace of the church: we may doubtless conclude that it must be the duty of every inhabitant of Great Britain.

But if a passenger be bound to pray for the safety of the vessel in which he sails, and for all those on board; he certainly ought to redouble his fervency and importunity during a tremendous storm, or when the ship is in imminent danger of being wrecked. This is not the time for idle disputes concerning the previous conduct of the master, the pilot, or the seamen: for this, in such an emergency, would be little short of madness, especially in persons unskilled in navigation. The circumstances of the vessel demand imperiously, that all who are capable of labouring, should labour, and that all, who can pray, should arise “ and call upon God; if so be God may think upon them, “ that they may not perish.” In a similar situation, Paul, during his voyage to Rome as a prisoner, prayed and prevailed, and the Lord “ gave him all that failed with him.” Yet Paul not only *imagined*, but *was sure*, that the persons concerned had acted improperly, and, by rejecting salutary advice, had involved themselves and the whole company in the most extreme danger.

If then our country is indeed threatened with invasion by a fierce and indignant foe, who has

* 1 Tim. ii. 1, 2.

² Jon. i. 6.

already spread devastation through a vast part of Europe, and is at present attempting to convulse both Asia, Africa, and America: if we have had, or still have, reason to dread domestick insurrections: if our sister-kingdom has been rendered a scene of bloodshed and confusion, and is in danger of still more dire calamities; whilst its vicinity may well increase our alarm, as well as excite our sympathy: if *we* have been preserved beyond expectation, by most extraordinary providential interpositions in our favour: if besieged, plundered, or burning cities and towns, deserted and desolated fields and villages, slaughtered or violated relatives; assassinations, massacres, and scenes the distant report of which has chilled our hearts and made our ears to tingle, are to be deprecated: if any thing in our constitution, laws, liberties, national independence, peace, and prosperity, be worth preservation: and if there be any thing dreadful in the murder, imprisonment, or banishment of all those in the land, who have *on any account* been distinguished characters; in the riot, plunder, and atrocities attending publick convulsions; or in the ruin of our commerce and manufactures, which, with other calamities that cannot be enumerated, must inevitably follow: we may then confidently maintain that we are bound by every obligation to unite our ceaseless prayers in behalf of the country. For whatever may be pretended or argued, as far as human foresight can reach, it is indubitable that all these calamities await us, in case our enemies should prevail, according to the desire of their hearts, in this tremendous contest. At the same time, there is little

little prospect, that we shall be able permanently and effectually to stand our ground, without some special interposition of the Lord in our behalf: nor does it appear possible to obtain any peace, in the present crisis, which could give us the least prospect of future security.

But if prayer for the land be our undeniable duty, surely few words may suffice to convince every pious person that it is incumbent on us to unite in supplication for the church of God which is among us. We would not so far forget ourselves, as to launch out in invective against our enemies: but who can help seeing, that could they accomplish their avowed purposes, they would not only overturn our national church, but likewise disannul our sabbaths, and adopt measures subversive of Christianity itself? On former occasions, Britons, in pleading for the land, have been accustomed to consider the protestant interest as the cause of God, and as endangered by the machinations and assaults of papal powers: but is vital Christianity at this time less exposed from the efforts of our present enraged enemies? “Let no man,” brethren, “deceive you with vain words:” not only our outward advantages, but our religion itself is at stake; and it therefore behoves us to beseech the Lord, that he would, in these troublesome times, “build the walls,” and secure the peace of Jerusalem. Surely no situation, no peculiarity of sentiment, no distinction of any sort, should indispose any pious person, in these circumstances of extreme danger, to join the prayers of his brethren for those interests, which ought

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to be dearer to us, than property, or liberty, or life itself.

We should therefore, beyond all dispute, in publick, and social, and private worship, continually and fervently beseech the Lord, not to permit his cause in our land to be run down, his sabbaths to be abolished, his sanctuaries profaned, his ministers silenced or banished, his ordinances inhibited or restricted, or his word sunk into neglect and contempt. He might most justly permit all these evils, attended by other dreadful calamities, to come upon us; and he could easily render his gospel triumphant in other places, should this favoured land be left in total darkness: but we may beseech him to “work for his own name’s sake, “that it should not be polluted among the “heathen.” This, however, leads us to consider,

II. The nature and special objects of those prayers, which may be supposed availing on such occasions.

“The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous “man availeth much¹.” But of our whole fallen race, “There is none righteous, no not “one,” except by the faith of our Lord Jesus Christ, and by the grace of the gospel.

We ought not indeed to undervalue the publick honour put upon God and religion, by the observance of days set apart for fasting and prayer, through the whole nation: yet we must maintain, that the remnant of penitent believers are the only persons, whose intercessions for the land can properly be considered as effectual

¹ Jam. v. 16.

fectual and prevailing: and these should not be restricted to any season, but ascend incessantly before the throne of grace. Provided this were indeed the case, though we must lament, that so few in comparison attend in a suitable manner on these occasional services, yet we need not be discouraged. Alas, this has always, in great measure, been the case, even in times of peculiar reformation; as we shall readily perceive, by comparing the records of the most pious kings of Judah, with the testimony of the contemporary prophets concerning the national character of the Jews.

We must however remember, that all the prayers, even of this faithful remnant, are not alike acceptable and prevailing. When James and John had presented a request to the Lord Jesus, he replied, "Ye know not what ye ask." And when they wanted permission to "command fire from heaven to consume" the Samaritans; he rebuked them, saying, "Ye know not what manner of spirit ye are of." Even Elijah once impatiently requested to die: yet he "was translated that he should not see death." And on the other hand, the repeated and most earnest intreaty of Moses, that he might enter the promised land, was finally refused. Yet what righteous men ever prayed more effectually and prevalently than they did on other occasions?

It is therefore of great importance for us to understand, with accuracy, the nature and special objects of that prayer, which powerfully and certainly prevails: and while this is stated, according to the oracles of God, for the benefit of those who desire to know and perform

their duty ; some objections, which are groundlessly advanced against the duty itself, or our supposed way of attending to it, may likewise be obviated.

When the Apostle speaks of “ the effectual “ fervent prayer of a righteous man ;” he is supposed by several expositors to refer to the powerful suggestions of the Holy Spirit to the minds of the prophets, by which they were inwardly moved to ask, with confidence and earnestness, the miraculous interposition of God, on particular occasions, in support of their testimony : and the prayer of Elijah, by which he illustrates the subject, was certainly of this kind. Yet this would never have been proposed as an example and encouragement to believers in general, if there had not been something of a similar nature in their acceptable prayers. Through our heavenly Advocate “ we all have access by one Spirit unto the Father :” for “ the Spirit helpeth our infirmities :” and thus we pray *in* or *by* the Spirit. In order therefore that our supplications may be accepted and answered, they must be dictated to our hearts by the Holy Spirit.

But how shall we know, whether our prayers be of this kind or not ?—We cannot distinguish between the actings of our own minds and the effect of divine influences, except by considering the nature and tendency of our desires and expectations ; but we may conclude, safely and without hesitation, that every prayer, which accords to the Scriptures, is presented by the teaching and assistance of the Holy Spirit. We may premise therefore, that no formal lifeless prayer, the language of the lips without
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any corresponding affections or emotions of the heart, can accord with the holy Scriptures: but supposing that we earnestly desire some real or imagined good, and fervently and importunately intreat the Lord to bestow it upon us; we have only to enquire, whether the *motive* and *object* of such desire be *scriptural* or not, in order to a determination of the question before us.

To instance in some particulars. We may enquire, Whether the supposed good, which we are earnestly seeking, be expressly promised in the word of God. Can we present our prayer, and pour out our hearts, in the language of the promises? Do we understand them in their genuine import? And do we seek the fulfilment of them in the due order and manner?

Again: Do our supplications and requests accord to the *precepts* of the holy law of our God, and to the spirit of the blessed gospel? And are they dictated by that *love* to God and man, which the whole Scripture inculcates? The prayers which are presented under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, are uniformly of this kind; for "his fruit is in all goodness, "and righteousness, and truth."

This consideration ought particularly to be attended to, in our intercession for the church and nation: for we cannot expect to prevail in these prayers, except we cultivate a compassionate, forgiving, and loving spirit towards our enemies, which no crimes or injuries can overcome or weary out; as well as an expansive benevolence for the whole human race. We should be peculiarly desirous of being preserved, if it be the will of God, in the manner
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which is most conducive to the general good of mankind, and in particular to that of the nation with which we are now at war. In this respect we have need, very diligently and jealously, to watch over our own hearts; lest any leaven of resentment, or desire of aggrandizement, wealth, or prosperity at their expence, should pollute our prayers, and defeat the end of them. For these things must certainly come from our own spirit, and not from the Spirit of truth and love.

A due regard to the *providence* of God is another mark, by which acceptable prayer may be distinguished. We should enquire therefore, whether we desire to acknowledge his hand, to submit to and adore his justice, and to thank him for his mercies, in all the events and changes which we witness and experience? Whether we expect protection and success from him alone, whatever instruments or means are employed? And whether we are prepared to give him all the glory?—The subordination likewise of all temporal concerns to the good of our immortal souls, and the best interests of mankind; and the desire of being protected, delivered, and assisted, *in order* that we may usefully fill up our stations in the church and in the community, with a contented mind, and without “seeking great things for ourselves,” are implied in this regard to Providence. The prayers, which spring from this happy frame of mind, are doubtless dictated by “the Spirit of grace and supplication.” Thus Solomon prayed for wisdom, that he might be qualified to govern in a suitable manner the kingdom to which God had advanced him; but he offered
no

no petition for " long life, riches, or the life " of his enemies : " and if his lot had been cast in a humbler station, the same views and desires would have influenced him to request grace sufficient, to enable him to discharge the duties of it in a manner honourable to God and profitable to his brethren ; and not to have sought advancement to a higher rank in life. But if discontent, impatience, ambition, or avarice dictate our supplications, the Lord may graciously pardon them, but he will by no means accept or answer them.

The prayers, which spring from a holy state of heart, produced by the influences of the divine Spirit, will also be accompanied with correspondent exertion in the use of all proper means, in order to obtain the blessings we desire. For instance; he, who prays aright for the conversion and salvation of his children, is sedulous in giving them pious instructions, careful in setting them a good example, punctual in bringing them under the means of grace, and watchful in keeping them out of the way of temptation. Like Abraham " he " commands his children and his household " after him, that they may keep the way of " the Lord : " and worldly motives do not induce him to place them at a distance from the ordinances of God, or in the midst of bad examples and ensnaring allurements.

Thus our prayers, if spiritual, will influence our conduct in every particular ; and the same fervent desire, which dictates the petition, will stimulate the endeavour. That effectual fervent prayer especially, which we are now called on to present in behalf of the church and nation,

tion, should be connected with a steady exertion, in our several places, to accomplish the general and particular objects of our supplications.

The holy Scriptures further teach us, that all those, who in former ages prayed with the greatest acceptance and success, had an especial regard to the glory of God in their requests, and were ready to subordinate every other interest to this grand concern; requesting personal and national deliverance and protection, with all other blessings, in order that God might be honoured in the open view of mankind, by his interpositions in behalf of his worshippers. And this, in every possible case, furnished them with a never-failing plea. Thus Moses, Joshua, David, Daniel, Nehemiah, and many others, supplicated the Lord for Israel, beseeching him to deliver them "for his name's sake, that it should not be polluted among the heathen:" and that "all the nations of the earth might know, that he was the Lord God, even he only." Our Lord also most emphatically teaches us the same lesson, by beginning the prayer, which he gave his disciples, with these words, "Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name; thy kingdom come; thy will be done, as in heaven so on earth." It may therefore be of use to us, in determining how far our prayers are presented in a right spirit, seriously to ask ourselves, whether the glory of God, the success of the gospel, and the peace, purity, and enlargement of the church, be habitually, and at those seasons especially, the leading desires of our hearts.

Finally,

Finally, the acceptable prayer of which we speak, is that of a man, who approaches, as a guilty, polluted, helpless sinner, to a God of infinite majesty and holiness, pleading for every blessing, not “ for his own righteousness,” or for that of the persons for whom he supplicates, but “ for the Lord’s great mercies;” and presenting his requests, in deep humility and lively faith, through the alone meritorious intercession of our Great High Priest, and Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous.

Let us briefly recapitulate these particulars. When our prayers are indeed the fervent desires of our heart; when we request the fulfilment of the Lord’s express promises; when the spirit of them accords to that of the law of love and that of the blessed gospel; when we present them with a due regard to the Providence of God, in submission, dependence, and expectation; when we accompany them with a diligent attention to other duties, and especially to the proper means of obtaining the blessings for which we pray; when our leading desire is that God may be glorified, and the cause of true religion promoted; and when we offer such petitions through the mediation of Christ, by faith in his name and his atoning blood, with a deep consciousness of unworthiness, and an entire reliance on the free mercy of God, to pardon our sins and accept our services: then we may be fully assured, that our’s is “ the effectual fervent prayer of the righteous man which availeth much.”

It may, however, be useful to consider briefly the *special objects* of those supplications, which
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accord to the present circumstances of the nation, and of the church. Amidst the perils of these critical times, there are persons of different descriptions who seem to think, that they who pray for their country, must of course *desire the destruction of their enemies, and the gratification of national ambition, rapacity, or resentment, by bloody victories.* But indeed to be preserved from invasions, civil wars, and persecutions; and to have the invaluable blessings of religious light and liberty continued to us and to our posterity, and extended to all around us, ought to form the substance of our united requests in this respect. We should rejoice to hear that the rulers of France had formed plans so beneficial to that country, and safe to their neighbours; that we could cordially beseech the Lord to prosper them: but while they persist in their avowed purpose of inundating this land with blood, of subverting our government, and of destroying our religion, we must still pray, ‘ Abate their pride, assuage their malice, and confound their devices.’ It should be gratifying to every one of our hearts, to be preserved from impending danger without a single individual losing his life: but if it please “ the Lord God of salvation ” to “ answer us by terrible things in righteousness; ” who are we that we should reply against God? Doubtless Hezekiah and Isaiah would have preferred the humbling and softening of Sennacherib’s heart to the destruction of his army: but as he continued to boast, menace, and blaspheme; and as the Lord declared that he would “ put an hook in his nose, and a bridle in his lips, and turn him back by the way ” “ in

" in which he came ;" and at length flew an hundred and eighty five thousand of his men in one night ; shall the protected and delivered servants of the Lord quarrel with this awful dispensation, or refuse him their tribute of grateful praise ?

We ought, however, more especially to unite in fervent prayer for the restoration of peace : and how many or great soever the obstacles to this most desirable event may seem ; we should in that case, without doubt, before long be called to join in thanksgivings to God, for having " regarded the voice of our supplications." In this part of our duty, we should look beyond our own country ; and intercede in behalf of the several regions, which have been ravaged or kept in perpetual alarms by the late extraordinary commotions : not forgetting poor, oppressed, and almost desolated France ; but earnestly beseeching God to send its inhabitants the blessings of peace, good government, rational liberty, and the gospel of salvation.

But above all it behoves us to pray with great fervency and constancy, that " the Spirit " may be poured upon us from on high : " that all the ministers of religion, however distinguished, ' may be illuminated with the true ' knowledge and understanding of the holy ' word of God ; and both by their life and ' doctrine set it forth and shew it accordingly : ' that ' all, who are called Christians, may be ' led into the way of truth, and hold the faith, ' in unity of spirit, in the bond of peace, and ' in righteousness of life : ' that purity in doctrine and practice may adorn every part of the Christian church ; and that every thing which

interrupts its harmony, deforms its beauty, or weakens the energy of its testimony to the truth, may be entirely removed: that *labourers* and *faithful stewards of the mysteries of God* may be sent forth and multiplied: that an effectual stand may be made against infidelity, impiety, and every species of heresy and false religion: that heavenly wisdom, with every blessing, spiritual and temporal, may be abundantly conferred on our gracious Sovereign and on all the numerous branches of the royal family; on our nobles, counsellors, ministers of state, senators, and magistrates, and on all who possess power and influence; that each individual, in his vocation and ministry, may faithfully and effectually glorify God and serve his generation: that the seminaries of publick and private education, (especially those, in which young persons are trained up, on whom the charge of supporting religion, or of conducting publick business, must shortly devolve,) may be so regulated, as best to answer the great ends proposed by them: and that the blessing of God may abundantly attend every plan formed, and attempt made, for the instruction of the children of the poor, for the prevention of crimes, for the reformation of the vicious, for the alleviation of misery, and above all for the spread of the gospel of salvation to every part of the globe.

It seems undeniable that prayers to this effect accord to the Scriptures, and may be offered under the special influence of the Holy Spirit: but should some *clauses* in this compendious statement meet with disapprobation, we only intreat those who object, to join with us in this
season

season of danger, as far as they can with a clear conscience. *Exact coincidence* is not the object: we only wish to unite the whole body of Christians throughout the land, in prayer for our country and for the church of God that is among us; according to what each person, after serious and careful deliberation, deems most conducive to our permanent advantage. For we are fully satisfied that such supplications will be answered, not according to the opinions of this or the other class of men, but in the manner which infinite wisdom sees to be the best for us.—We proceed therefore to consider,

III. The prevalency of acceptable prayer, according to the Scriptures.

The speculations of reasoning men have deluded vast numbers into a persuasion, that God, (if indeed they allow that there is a God,) having established certain regulations, which they call *the laws of nature*, leaves the affairs of the universe, at least in ordinary circumstances, to take their own course, without any special interposition: and consequently that the opinion of religious persons, concerning the prevalency of prayer, implies a vain and groundless expectation; as if God would suspend or change these laws continually, at the desire of his worshippers, and to serve their selfish purposes. Thus they not only exclude the Creator from the government of the world, and the care of his creatures, by a refined species of *practical Atheism*; and bring forward a sentiment diametrically opposite to all revealed religion, as if they vainly expected by a single objection to subvert the whole system: but they likewise perplex

perplex many pious persons, and give Satan an opportunity of discouraging their prayers, because they cannot explain in what manner they can be availing!

The Scriptures, however, do not call us to *explain*, or *comprehend*, the ways of God, but to believe, adore, and obey. Not a sparrow falls to the ground, not a hair from our heads, without Him : and he hath ten thousand ways of influencing and governing the combination and coincidence of causes and effects, without altering by miracle their regular course. “ He doeth what he will in the armies of heaven “ and among the inhabitants of the earth ; “ and none can stay his hand, or say to him, “ What doest thou ? ” He is the First Mover in every event, by whatever subordinate agent it is performed. All creatures are his instruments : but he works by them according to the nature of each. He accomplishes his purposes by the instrumentality of rational voluntary agents, without in the least interfering with their *free agency* ; and whilst each follows the prevailing inclination of his own heart, they do no more than “ what his hand and his “ counsel determined before to be done.”¹ If they act from holy principles, and willingly obey his commandments, he accepts and recompenses their services : but if they be influenced by corrupt passions to break his righteous law, they receive the punishment due to their crimes, while “ his counsel still stands, and “ he does all his pleasure.”²

When Joshua was appointed to lead the host

¹ Acts iv. 27, 28. ² Gen. i. 26. Is. x. 5—7. 15—19.

xlvi. 9—11.

of Israel against Amalek, Moses engaged in prayer for success in the battle : and the prayer of Moses was at least as efficacious as the courage and conduct of Joshua. In this sense, therefore, " The effectual fervent prayer of a " righteous man availeth much : " not by inducing the Lord to alter his plan ; but as an appointed mean of accomplishing that plan, in a way honourable to his name, instructive and encouraging to his people, and convincing to every spectator. For when the Lord thus evidently answers the prayers of his servants, who can but say, " Truly there is a reward for the " righteous ! Truly there is a God that judgeth " the earth ! "

The whole arrangement of the gospel is manifestly suited to excite the expectation of an answer to all the prayers, which we present before God according to his revealed will. Waiting on him, in the humble posture of supplicants, powerfully tends to bring all holy affections into lively exercise, and to prepare the soul for the suitable reception and due improvement of the blessings which are thus desired and sought. The answer of prayer likewise exceedingly promotes the increase of faith ; it inspires and strengthens hope and patience ; it enlivens love and gratitude and holy joy ; and it excites chearful diligence in self-denying services. That, which is given in answer to the united and fervent supplications of numbers, " abounds in many thanksgivings unto " God : " and when probabilities seem against our success or deliverance, and yet we do succeed and are delivered according to our earnest and persevering requests ; we receive the clearest
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and deepest conviction imaginable of the reality and importance of true religion.

It is needless to insist particularly on the examples, recorded in Scripture, of the prevalence of prayer. Consider Abraham interceding for Sodom, and closing his petitions before the Lord ceased to grant them! Jacob wrestling, weeping, making supplication, and saying, "I will not let thee go, except thou bless me:" when the Angel ("even the Lord God of Hosts,") at length answered, "Thy name shall be no more called Jacob but Israel; for as a prince hast thou power with God, and with men, and hast prevailed!" Moses "standing in the breach" to turn away the wrath of God from Israel, while He says, "*Let me alone*, that I may destroy them in a moment!" And David's short ejaculation, "O Lord, turn the counsel of Ahithophel into foolishness!"—The time would fail to speak of Samuel, Aza, Jehoshaphat, Elijah, Hezekiah, Isaiah, Daniel, Ezra, and Nehemiah, and of the apostles, and the church in the New Testament. What shall we then say to these things, if we do not unreservedly admit, that the prayer of faith is exceedingly powerful, and that nothing can withstand its efficacy?

But if the prayer of an individual frequently proved so prevalent: what may we not hope from the united, fervent, and persevering supplications of many thousands, perhaps tens of thousands, could the whole body of real Christians be excited to concur in the present emergency?—"Again I say unto you, that if two
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¹ Gen. xxxii. 24—30. Hos. xii. 4. 5.

“ of you shall agree on earth, as touching any thing they shall ask, it shall be done for them by my Father who is in heaven.” Surely these words of our blessed Saviour, viewed in connection with the scriptural declarations and examples already considered, authorize us to form great expectations, when we thus agree together in “ making our requests known unto God!”

Prayer has indeed already prevailed: and our protection hitherto, in so wonderful a manner, amidst the shock of nations, should be regarded as an encouraging exhortation to “ pray always and not faint:” and to be more earnest, abundant, and enlarged in our petitions. Some, however, may be discouraged from this duty by an error in judgment, connected with deep humility. ‘ Who am I, that my prayers should be of any avail, in preserving the nation from desolating judgments, or the church from persecution. My former heinous sins, and my present numerous defilements and distressing conflicts, render me unworthy, and often almost wholly unable, to pray for myself: and my own case so engrosses my thoughts and excites my anxious fears, that when, covered with shame, I approach the throne of grace, I feel myself altogether unfit to intercede in behalf of others, and indeed have little heart to attempt it.’ But let such persons recollect, that, after the severest trials and conflicts, conscious guilt had just caused Job to exclaim, “ I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes;” when the Lord directed his offending friends to present their sacrifices by his hands: “ And,” says he, “ my servant

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“ Job

“ Job shall pray for you ; for him will I accept¹. ” And again, Isaiah had said, “ Woe is me, I am “ undone, I am a man of unclean lips ; ” before he so effectually united with Hezekiah, in “ lifting up his prayer for the remnant that was “ left.” Our supplications indeed could not be accepted, any more than our persons or other services, did not our great High Priest present them with his all-prevailing intercession. But now this provision is made ; deep humility peculiarly prepares us for coming in simple faith, and entire reliance on the Lord Jesus, to the throne of grace. And presenting our supplications for others, especially for the church and people of God, admirably tends to encourage our hearts, even in the darkest seasons, to make our personal desires and requests known to our heavenly Father. In short, did we abound more in intercessions for our brethren and fellow sinners, and for the church and nation ; we should every one of us pray, with more comfort and expectation, for ourselves, and for those who are most nearly connected with us.

We cannot indeed be absolutely certain, that our prayers for the land will be answered in the manner we intend : for we remember, that the Lord once said concerning Judah, “ Though “ Moses and Samuel stood before me, yet my “ mind could not be towards this people². ” But we have considerable ground of hope, that we are not yet reduced to this awful condition : nay, we have many reasons for thinking, that God will yet bless the means we may use to prevent our being reduced to it. One thing, however, is certain ; our prayers will either prevail

¹ Job xlii. 5—9.

² Jer. xv. 1.

vail for the land, or they will return into our own bosom. " Verily it shall be well with" all those, who thus attend to the duties of the times; and, in one way or other, " they shall " be hid in the day of the Lord's anger." And we may likewise confidently expect, that our supplications will be answered, in the conversion of many individuals, who, at all events, may be the seed of a future harvest.—But we must proceed to consider,

IV. The other duties which should accompany our prayers, in the present circumstances of the nation.

If Moses stood before God, in behalf of Israel, " to turn away his indignation from them, lest " he should destroy them;" he likewise stood before Israel, in the cause of God, by using all his influence and authority to turn the people from idolatry and wickedness: and in both respects, he stemmed the torrent of vengeance, which was about to burst upon the nation. This single instance may suffice to shew the attentive reader, what is meant by *the other duties which should accompany our prayers*.

It is obvious to every one, who seriously and impartially considers the subject, that *national guilt is the aggregate of the sins committed by the several individuals who constitute the nation*. We have therefore all contributed, and some of us in a very large proportion, to raise that black cloud of divine vengeance, which hangs over the land and threatens our destruction: and consequently we are all required to humble ourselves before God for our own sins; nor can any individual plead an exemption.

The persons indeed, for whom these reflections are principally intended, are habitually penitent : yet it behoves the most eminent Christians, according to the examples of beloved Daniel, and Ezra, and Nehemiah, to renew their personal repentance, with every expression of godly sorrow, deep humility, and self-condemnation, while they plead in behalf of our guilty land. They should especially investigate, with care and diligence, the whole of their conduct, since they first made a profession of the gospel, and of devoting themselves to the Lord according to its encouragements and obligations ; confessing, with grief and shame, every instance in which they have acted inconsistently, and by any misconduct excited or increased prejudice in the minds of others ; as well as the unfaithfulness and unfruitfulness of which they are conscious. This will of course make way for a renewed cordial acceptance of God's salvation, and a solemn dedication of body and soul to his service.

It is likewise very useful, in these circumstances, to reflect deeply on the various and horrible abominations which prevail in that collective body, of which we are sinful members : especially such as disgrace Christianity, and harden Jews, Mahometans, Pagans, or infidels in their prejudices ; or which fatally deceive souls almost without number. We should dwell on these subjects with serious reflection, till genuine zeal and love affect our hearts, and cause us to sigh and mourn over these evils *as our own concern* ; instead of indulging the disposition, which is too common, of exposing the crimes of others with apparent satisfaction, or proud self-preference. We know what a gracious charge

charge was given to the destroying angel, concerning that remnant in Jerusalem, who thus “fighed and mourned for the abominations that “were done in the midst of it¹:” how the Lord approved the same spirit and conduct in Jeremiah, in Daniel, and in Ezra, and especially in Josiah²: and how manifestly this was the disposition, not only of Paul towards his unbelieving countrymen, but of the Lord Jesus himself, who wept over the crimes and approaching miseries of that devoted city where his blood was about to be shed.

Diligent and impartial self-examination, not only as to the ground of our hope in God, but especially in respect to every part of our present conduct, is a concurrent duty of great importance. This, however, will not answer the desired end, unless it be accompanied with prayer to the great Searcher of hearts to prove and try us: that we may indeed grow more acquainted with our own hearts, and thus be taught to rectify whatever prevents our usefulness; and instructed in attending to duties hitherto neglected or improperly performed; and enabled to bear a decided and honourable testimony to the great truths of Christianity, and that holiness by which they are adorned and recommended.

This is peculiarly needful in these days of prevailing infidelity, heresy, and impiety; as well as of most deplorable immorality. At such a time all, that “love the Lord “Jesus in sincerity,” should unite in a bold and zealous attachment to the grand doctrines

¹ Ezek. ix. ² Dan. ix. x. Ezra ix. Neh. ix.

2 Chron. xxxiv. 27, 28.

trines of his glorious gospel, a constant and reverent attendance on his sacred ordinances, a strict but chearful observance of his holy day, a diligent and unreserved obedience to all his commandments, and a close imitation of his bright example. The revival of pure Christianity should be our object: but in this every one ought to begin at home. As far as this is done a revival will take place: but we are not warranted to expect it in any other way.

In this view the importance of family-religion, and a careful performance of the duties incumbent upon parents, and masters, and other superior relations, must be manifest to every reflecting person. The notice which the Lord took of Abraham's conduct, in this respect, has been mentioned: but we may here remind the reader of its subserviency to the accomplishment of the promises to his posterity. "He will command his children and his household after him; and they shall keep the way of the Lord, to do justice and judgment, that the Lord may bring upon Abraham that which he hath spoken of him." In like manner Joshua, when zealously endeavouring to promote true religion among his people, declared without hesitation, "As for me and my house, we will serve the Lord." On the other hand, the indolent, timid, and indulgent conduct of Eli, respecting his sons, brought ruin on his family, and dreadful calamities on Israel: and the misconduct even of Jehoshaphat, in forming an affinity with the family of Ahab, did not fail to produce similar fatal effects.

It is seriously apprehended, that remissness in family-religion, relaxation of domestick authority

riety and regularity, and the adoption of worldly maxims in the education and disposal of children, constitute a considerable part of the *sins of the church* in the present day, as distinguishable from the sins of the irreligious part of the nation. These evils seem to have made way for the apostacy of great numbers from evangelical principles, to heretical systems, nay to scepticism, infidelity, or open impiety; even from among those who were educated in professedly religious families. And we may be confident, that nothing short of a very strict and zealous attention to these most important duties, with an ardent desire of perpetuating vital religion in our families and to posterity, will be permanently and decidedly successful, against the bold, and strenuous, and indefatigable attempts of the enemies of our holy religion.

If we prevail by prayer with the Lord to spare us, and to "pour out his Spirit from on high upon us;" this will certainly be one effect of that merciful dispensation: men, professing evangelical godliness, will spare no pains, but will forego every flattering and advantageous prospect, in order to "bring up their children in the nurture and admonition of the Lord." They will become far more desirous, that they should be pious Christians, than accomplished, learned, wealthy, or honoured in the world; and they will be especially concerned, that they may possess the dispositions and qualifications, requisite for serving their generation, for supporting the interests of religion, and for transmitting this invaluable blessing to posterity also. Finally,

* Ps. lxxviii. 5-7:

Finally, every man has his talents, whether few or many. Statesmen, senators, magistrates, ministers of religion; the rich, the learned, the ingenious, should avail themselves of their peculiar advantages and the influences thus given them, to “serve their generation according to the will of God,” while they continue instant in prayer for the church and nation. They ought to distinguish themselves, by a valiant, decided, and zealous conduct, in countenancing and supporting the cause and the friends of truth and righteousness: and in this course, they may hope, like Moses, to be honoured of God, to “stand in the breach, and to turn away his indignation” from our guilty land.

Even they, who are placed in a more obscure station, and are known only in a narrow circle, have some little influence; and they should be careful not to bury their one talent in the earth: for by a pious conversation, an attention to relative duties, and a readiness to every work and labour of love; they may accomplish more than they suppose, in promoting the grand object of all our supplications.

These things, as connected with an habitual and manifest endeavour to shew ourselves peaceable and peace-makers, in the church and in the community; steady friends to social order, and to the constitution and government under which a kind providence has placed us, (yet avoiding all the violence and bitterness of party-disputes;) dutiful and loyal subjects to our king; harmless, blameless, and kind among our neighbours; contented in our station; staying our minds on God, in chearful and humble confidence, amidst dangers

gers and alarms ; and following meekness, temperance, truth, and righteousness in our whole conduct, seem to constitute our present duties. And as far as the Lord shall be pleased to bless our endeavours to increase the number of those who thus pray, and who thus aim to act consistently with their prayers, in reliance on the mercy and grace of our Lord Jesus Christ ; our hopes may reasonably be encouraged, that “ He “ will work for his own name’s sake,” and not suffer any enemy to prevail against us.

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A FORM

A FORM OF PRAYER,

Concerning the present state of publick affairs ; intended to be introduced in the worship of the family or closet, by those who wish for such a help ; or to suggest hints to others.

MOST merciful God, who “ doest what thou wilt in the armies of heaven, and among the inhabitants of the earth ;” and orderest all things in perfect wisdom, righteousness, truth, and love ; we desire to look to thee for help and protection in this season of peculiar danger and alarm. We acknowledge, O Lord, that thou mightest most justly leave us in the hands of our enemies, and by them execute deserved vengeance upon us. Thou hast, in a most distinguishing manner, favoured us as a nation with invaluable advantages, both temporal and spiritual, during a long term of years ; so that no people on earth has been more highly favoured in thy providence. But alas, we have been most shamefully ungrateful for these mercies ; we have grossly abused our peculiar privileges ; we have multiplied our provocations against thee ; our own sins and the sins of our land bear witness against us ; we blush and are ashamed to look up unto thee, our offended God ; and we are ready to fear that we are ripe for thy heaviest judgments. Yet we humbly pray thee, “ in wrath remember mercy :” and while thou correctest us for our multiplied iniquities, do not give up a people, that is called by thy name, to be a reproach to the heathen, lest they should say “ Where is now their God ?”

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“ We do not present our supplications before thee, for our righteousness, but for thy great mercies.” We therefore beseech thee, O Lord, to glorify thy mercy in thy dealings with us. Thou art the Protector of all who trust in thee, and without thy almighty aid all human help is vain. O preserve our country from war and bloodshed : permit no invader to land on our shores : let no domestick dissensions plunge us into those dreadful calamities which other countries have experienced : and suffer no persecutor to deprive us of our religious liberty, and our inestimable privileges.

Thou, O Lord, hast all hearts in thy hand. Turn the thoughts and desires of all parties, involved in these bloody contests, to peaceful measures. Say to the destroying angel, “ It is enough, stay now thine hand.” Speak the word, and the storm will subside into a calm. O thou God of peace, stop that desolating torrent which is deluging the nations. Rescue those countries which have so long been visited with the awful scourge of war. Sanctify the calamities to the surviving sufferers : and prevent the further effusion of human blood.

Over-rule, we beseech thee, the astonishing revolutions and convulsions of the past years, that they may subserve the more extensive spread of thy gospel : and let it appear that thou didst permit the temporary success of infidelity and atheism, in order to prepare the way for the peaceful triumphs of pure Christianity, over every kind of irreligion, superstition, and false religion.— Compassionate, O God of mercy, that country, with which we are now engaged in horrid war ; whose rulers have been employed as scourges of

other nations, but have most of all desolated their own land. Send its inhabitants, O Lord, we pray thee, the blessings of stable peace, good government, rational liberty, and true religion. And may those, who once were distinguished characters, and who, amidst the most distressing and humiliating scenes, still survive, have their calamities sanctified to their everlasting benefit.

We beseech thee, O merciful Lord, to bless thy servant, our gracious King, with thy choicest blessings. Be pleased to defend him, and every branch of the Royal Family, against all dangers and assailants. Supply them with every good and perfect gift : and enable them to glorify thee and to serve their generation, in those exalted stations which thou hast assigned them ; and at length bring them to thine everlasting felicity.

Direct and prosper the deliberations of the counsellors, ministers of state, and senators, to whom the affairs of the nation are entrusted. Endue them with wisdom and knowledge ; and dispose them to such measures, as thou wilt bless for the preservation of order at home, and the speedy restoration of peace abroad : and till thou shalt see good to grant our most earnest prayers for this blessing ; defend us in that manner, if it be thy will, which may most conduce to the good of the whole human race.

O Lord, we pray thee protect our soldiers and seamen, and those who lead them forth to battle. Preserve their lives, sanctify their perils and hardships, and save their immortal souls.

We beseech thee, O Lord, to look upon that neighbouring island, nearly connected with us, which is now in an alarming and awful state of
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distraction, and has been the scene of most terrible calamities. Calm, we pray thee, that tempest which now prevails. Direct the persons, to whom publick affairs are committed; to the wisest and most salutary measures; and grant, we earnestly beseech thee, that with returning peace and order, some effectual means may be used to communicate the blessed light of divine truth to all the inhabitants.

Teach and enable, O Lord, we intreat thee, all orders of men in these lands, to seek thy glory and the publick good, by a due improvement of the talents which thou hast committed to their stewardship.

Prosper the labours of all those, whom thou "*allowest* to be put in trust with the gospel." May they increase continually in wisdom and knowledge, in zeal and love, in simplicity and disinterestedness, and in self-denying diligence and activity; and grant them the sweet consolation of witnessing an abundant success to their labours. Illuminate all who bear the sacred character, however distinguished, 'with true knowledge and understanding of thy word; and grant that, both by their preaching and living, they may set it forth and shew it accordingly;'—and send forth many additional labourers into the harvest.

Bless all those, who in any station, stand in the breach, by their prayers and exertions, to turn away thine indignation from a guilty land. Prosper all means used for the reformation of our manners; the extirpation of national enormities; the revival of pure religion; the pious instruction of the rising generation, and in particular of those who are designed to fill the more important
stations

stations in church and state; the alleviation of misery and distress in these calamitous times; and especially for sending the gospel of salvation to the dark regions of the earth.

Lift up a standard, we beseech thee, against the infidelity, impiety, and profligacy, which at present threaten the destruction of our holy religion. Deliver thy church from whatever corrupts its purity, divides its unity, and weakens the energy of its testimony to thy truth. Grant that 'all who are called Christians, may be led 'into the way of truth; and hold the faith in 'unity of spirit, in the bond of peace, and in 'righteousness of life.' Extend the boundaries of thy church: and hasten the times, when the poor benighted Jews shall be converted to their long rejected Messiah; when the fulness of the gentiles shall come in; and when 'the nations 'shall beat their swords into ploughshares and 'learn war no more.'

O Lord, we intreat thee, hear and answer these our supplications; bless our endeavours; and fill our land with truth and righteousness: that it may be for thy glory, not only to preserve us from every enemy, and to continue our privileges to the latest posterity; but also to honour us, as thy instruments, to convey thy gospel, as the richest of all treasures, along with our extensive commerce, to the utmost borders of the earth. These and all mercies, we, poor sinful creatures, most humbly beseech thee to bestow upon us, of thy abundant goodness and mercy, through the mediation and for the sake of thy well beloved Son our Saviour, who is with thyself and the eternal Spirit, One God over all, blessed for evermore. Amen.

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